United Nations

Daily Highlights

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WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Security Council, acting under Chapter VII of Charter, authorizes increase in UNPROFOR strength of up to 6,550 troops, 150 military observers and 275 police monitors.

+ Secretary-General announces that Bosnian Serbs have ended attacks on Gorazde and withdrawn from military exclusion zone around town; says United Nations went to brink of war to attain peace.

+ In message to Special Representative Akashi, Secretary-General hails recent success of UNPROFOR; cites devotion to duty and calmness under pressure of entire United Nations operation.

+ Secretary-General of OIC urges Security Council to lift arms embargo against Bosnia and Herzegovina; calls for massive use of air strikes to end aggression against Republic.

+ Secretary-General congratulates South Africa on conduct of ongoing elections, noting performance of Independent Electoral Commission and UNOMSA observers.

+ Special Representative Clark says Cypriot parties are close to agreement on confidence-building package, but stresses need for Turkey's continued help; says measures have not been altered to disadvantage of Turkish Cypriots.

+ United Nations launches inter-agency appeal for $100 million to provide humanitarian aid to Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia for one year.

+ United Nations appeals for $62 million to provide emergency assistance for Afghanistan through September.

+ Somali leaders to meet in Nairobi on 10 May to prepare for upcoming National Reconciliation Conference.

(more)

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The Security Council today authorized an increase in the strength of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) of up to 6,550 troops, 150 military observers and 275 civilian police monitors, in addition to the reinforcement of 3,500 troops already approved in resolution 908 (1994). The Council took that action, under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter, in response to recommendations by the Secretary-General.

In unanimously adopting resolution 914 (1994), the Council reiterated its determination to ensure UNPROFOR's security and freedom of movement in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Speaking after the adoption of the resolution, Council President Don McKinnon (New Zealand) said UNPROFOR's mandate was to create the conditions of peace and security required for negotiation of an overall settlement. The Force could secure the delivery of humanitarian relief, monitor agreements already reached and use all necessary means, including force, to protect its personnel, he noted. However, the Council could not impose peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina by force or fight against or on behalf of any of the parties to the conflict there.

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The Bosnian Serbs have ended their attacks on Gorazde and pulled their heavy weapons out of the 20-kilometre exclusion zone around the town, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali announced last night. He said Gorazde was not just a "safe area" in theory but in fact. He noted that the United Nations now had 500 personnel in the town, and had been evacuating casualties and bringing in relief supplies for the last two days.

The Secretary-General said the Security Council, with the support of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), had taken a clear position regarding Bosnia and Herzegovina. There must be no further threats to the safe areas, United Nations humanitarian efforts must continue unimpeded, and all sides must commit to a cease-fire and negotiate a political solution in good faith.

The international community had never focused more attention on the Bosnian situation, and major gains had been made, the Secretary-General continued. Sarajevo was peaceful, central Bosnia was calm, and all the elements of a peace agreement were on the table. "We have gone to the brink of war to attain this peace. With vigilance and statesmanship, on all sides, we might now secure it," he concluded.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali last night praised Special Representative Yasushi Akashi and the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) for their successful performance in recent days. In a message to Mr. Akashi, he also recognized the achievements of UNPROFOR Commanders General Bertrand de Lapresle and Lieutenant-General Michael Rose.

The Secretary-General said the professionalism, devotion to duty and calmness under pressure of the entire United Nations operation exemplified the highest traditions of the Organization.

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The Secretary-General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, Hamid Algabid, today urged the Security Council to restore Bosnia and Herzegovina's "inherent and inalienable" right of self-defence, saying that the arms embargo against the Republic was in serious derogation of the United Nations Charter. He called for the massive use of air strikes if the Serbs did not comply with United Nations resolutions. The Council should authorize attacks on Serbian command and control facilities and other military targets without delay, he added.

Mr. Algabid said the barbaric Serbian assault on Gorazde and the inability of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) to ensure the inviolability of the safe area highlighted the need for effective action against "the Belgrade regime and its instruments of terror." The OIC was perturbed by arguments seeking to portray Serbian aggression against Bosnia and Herzegovina as an intractable civil war, he added.

The entire Islamic world was overwhelmed by anguish and indignation at the open genocide being committed against Muslims in the Republic, Mr. Algabid went on to say. He stressed that the OIC would cooperate fully with efforts to end the Serbian aggression, and noted that several of its members had offered to contribute troops to UNPROFOR.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has congratulated South Africa on the occasion of the country's first democratic elections, according to a United Nations spokesman. The Secretary-General expressed his pleasure at the conduct of the voting, which began yesterday, citing the performances of the voters themselves, the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), and the United Nations Observer Mission in South Africa (UNOMSA). The Mission has deployed a total of 2,120 personnel throughout the country to observe the elections.

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Special Representative Joe Clark yesterday said that the two parties in Cyprus were close to an historic agreement on a United Nations-sponsored package of confidence-building measures, but added that the continued help of Turkey was needed if failure were to be avoided. He told correspondents in Ankara that the impression that the measures had been altered to the disadvantage of the Turkish Cypriots was false. He stressed that the package offered concrete benefits to both sides and said the Turkish Cypriots should not reject it without considering what they stood to lose as a result.

Mr. Clark said that the reopening of the fenced area of Varosha and of Nicosia International Airport would promote trade and tourism and boost the

Turkish Cypriot economy. It was not true that the road between Varosha and the United Nations buffer zone would be taken away from Turkish Cypriot control. However, guarantees would be needed so that both sides could enter the area freely. The provisions regarding Nicosia Airport had not been been altered to help the Greek Cypriot community but would operate "for the equal benefit of both sides," he continued. The United Nations had to choose between a strict reading of the package, which would hurt everyone, and a sensible interpretation, which would help both sides.

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The United Nations has launched a consolidated inter-agency appeal for $100 million to provide humanitarian assistance for the Caucusus -- Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia -- over the next year. The aid programme will provide food to almost 1.4 million people affected by conflict and political instability in the region. It will also provide health care, including immunizations, and meals for school children.

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The United Nations today issued an inter-agency appeal for $62 million to provide emergency aid for Afghanistan until the end of September. Hundreds of thousands of Afghans have been affected by intense fighting in Kabaul and depend on humanitarian aid for their survival. In other parts of the country, which are generally peaceful, United Nations agencies will provide aid to refugees returning from neighbouring countries and to displaced persons. Assistance is also needed for mine clearance, and for the provision of water and electricity supplies and health services.

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Somali leaders will meet in Nairobi, Kenya, on 10 May to prepare for a National Reconciliation Conference in Mogadishu later in the month, according to the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM II). The meeting will establish procedures for participation in the Conference, which will elect a Transitional Government.

UNOSOM II hopes to ensure participation by all segments of Somali society in the Conference, and the Secretary-General's Special Representative, Lansana Kouyate, has been holding a series of consultations with political, clan and religious leaders ahead of the Nairobi meeting.

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